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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [ETRD](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: KNESSET SPEAKER READY TO SUPPORT PEACE, EXPAND
CONTACT WITH PA

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, Reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) On August 6, The Ambassador met with Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik, who is scheduled to see the Secretary in Washington on August 13. The Ambassador told Itzik that the Secretary was pleased with her recent visit to Jerusalem,

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which focused on preparing for the international meeting this fall. The meeting should allow the international community to endorse a framework of principles for a Palestinian state that would be developed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas over the next three months, which would allow negotiations to begin. The meeting will likely be small, but include key regional actors. Itzik suggested including Turkey, which has good relations with both Israel and the Arabs and has expressed a desire to help mediate.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador underlined that the Secretary had been especially impressed with the quality and depth of the Palestinian cabinet, particularly the surprisingly moderate Minister of Waqf, Sheikh Jamal Mohammed Bawatneh and the reform-minded Minister of Education, Lamis al-Alami. He understood Al-Alami had declared that the current Palestinian curriculum was not one of war, but also not one of peace and said she was open to curriculum reform. The Ambassador suggested that the GOI consider holding minister-to-minister meetings with the Palestinians to bring depth to the Israeli/Palestinian relationship beyond the dialogue between Abbas and Olmert. Itzik thought this was an excellent idea, but worried that Hamas would seek to exploit these meetings by using them to accuse the interim Palestinian government of being pro-Israel. She and the Ambassador discussed how he and Consul General Walles might facilitate initial meetings to reduce this problem.

¶3. (C) Itzik was pleased with her meetings with Abbas, Fayyad, and Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelelah al-Khatib in Amman on July 22, and the talks with al-Khatib and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul-Gheit in Jerusalem on July 25. She mentioned that al-Khatib was forward-leaning on his own, but when he was with Abul-Gheit, it was the more reserved Egyptian who clearly took charge. Itzik explained she was in frequent contact with Abbas and thinks Abbas and Olmert should meet every week to develop their relationship and prepare their people for an agreement. However, if Abbas looks too friendly with Israel, it plays into the hands of Hamas. Itzik further cautioned that Abbas' calls for elections could backfire if Hamas allows them and does well, especially if Abbas does not run for reelection. He is the best partner for peace, and any alternative would be worse. As far as she was concerned elections could wait until a Palestinian state was well established.

¶4. (C) Finally, the Ambassador asked Itzik about three

legislative issues: the recently-passed Defense Export Control Act (DECA), the ongoing work on copyright legislation, and implementation of the trafficking in persons (TIP) law. The Ambassador said he was pleased with the passage of DECA, and asked for an official translation. Itzik readily agreed but said that one would not be ready until the Knesset returns from recess in October. On copyright law, she said the Economic Committee is working during the recess on the draft legislation, and she will update us on progress. With regards to TIP, the Ambassador again commended them on their recent work but emphasized that money needed to be budgeted for victim services and shelters. Itzik indicated she would bear this in mind when the Knesset takes up the new budget in the fall.

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